



Netnographic Study on Parasocial Relationships between The Kop and Liverpool FC Through Instagram Account @indonesian_liverpool To Form Loyalty

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Abstract

Every world-class football club generally has loyal fans. In this netnography study the writers want to explain the parasocial relationship formed between Liverpool FC fans and the interaction of parasocial that occurs among fellow Liverpool fans via Instagram account @indonesian_liverpool. In this study it will also explain how parasocial relationships are formed. Where relationships seem to be one way. Although fans have submitted comments containing support, advice, or opinion they did not get a good response from Liverpool FC or its players who are often tagged on comments sent by fans. But it does not dampen the interest of fans to stay afloat on parasocial relationships. Parasocial interaction is also intertwined among fellow Liverpool FC fans who replied to each other comments, both about Liverpool FC and about players. This study also explains how finally it could form loyalty to Liverpool FC.

Keywords: study of netnography, parasocial relationships, parasocial interaction, loyalty

Introduction

Background

Football is a very popular sport not only in Indonesia even in the World. Every Football Team has fans who are always present both during matches and out of matches. Indonesia has never entered into the world's most prestigious soccer tournament. However, Indonesia is the best Football Fans in the world. Franz Beckenbauer said that Indonesia is one of the countries that have the most loyal supporter. And that is



evidenced by the high average number of stadium densities in Indonesia that can reach 96% (berita unik, 2018).

Indonesia also has a League which is a competition between clubs from all over the country. Fans from local clubs are also very militant. Base of fanatic supporters of Indonesia are Arema, Persebaya, Persib, Persipura, Sriwijaya and Persija (berita unik, 2018).

Football matches are also a long-awaited game on the screen. Not all fans can witness directly inside the stadium, they can watch through the glass screen or through streaming facilities that are available. For Indonesian soccer societies it has been ingrained and considered as a unifying sport. In the national event it is held competition between Rukun Tetangga or Rukun Warga, for example celebrating Indonesian Independence Day. In the international arena, Indonesia actually had its time in the World Cup 1938. But at that time Indonesia was not independent and still used the name of Dutch East Indies (CNN Indonesia, 2018).

Fans of football in Indonesia itself comes from all circles starting from children to adults, men and women. A tournament often followed by Indonesia and is a long-awaited event is the AFF Cup which is a biennial Football competition for Southeast Asian countries. League or Inter-Club Competition abroad is also a very popular competition by lovers of Indonesian football. Foreign League that aired in Indonesia is the English Premier League, La Liga Spain, Serie A Italy. Bundesliga German, Champions League and Europa League which is a competition between clubs in the European Blue Continent. Each of the league's participating clubs also has many fans in Indonesia such as: La Liga there are many fans of Barcelona and Real Madrid in Indonesia. In Serie A there are many fans of Juventus (Juventus), Romanisti (AS Roma), Milanisti (AC Milan), Inter Milan, and Napoli. Then the most popular foreign league in Indonesia is the English League which has the name of English Premier League (Goal.com, 2016). Each of English League clubs such as Liverpool, Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United, and Manchester City also have a considerable support base in Indonesia (Goal.com, 2016).

Liverpool has the most fans in Indonesia. This is obtained through a straightforward tally of Liverpool, as well as the world through data originating from Liverpool's official facebook account. More than a million people expressed their support for the club nicknamed the Reds. Indonesian fans who are commonly called The Kop.

Here are 10 countries that are considered to have the most Liverpool supporters (Liputan6, 2013) :

1. Indonesia (more than 1,300,000 people)
2. United Kingdom (1,170,000 people)
3. Thailand (843,000 people)
4. Malaysia (800,000 people)
5. India (584,000 people)
6. Mexico (453,000 people)



7. United States (393,000 people)
8. Egypt (380,000 people)
9. Turkey (356,000 people)
10. France (253,000 people)

The fact above dismissed that Liverpool has long been a champion and impressed poor achievement. The famous words of a legendary coach and best liverpool coach Bill Shankly have been imprinted and deeply embedded in the hearts of liverpool supporters: "If you cannot support us when we lose or draw, Never Support Us Again When We Win." "The Kop pledge, can be said of a loyal promise of supporters of Liverpool FC (lfcid.com, 2011).

Here is the contents of The Kop Pledge (lfcid.com, 2011):

1. When the team plays badly, sing louder, because that's when they need our support more.
2. If any player is playing badly, sing his name because he really needs it.
3. If the opponent is playing well, give them the credit and appreciation they deserve.

Liverpool have also won five Champions League titles which are the largest and only one of the UK's top badge of honor Champions League. Badge Of Honor is an award given by UEFA to the club that competes in the Champions League and has won the competition five times (bolasport.com, 2018) Liverpool fans also have the motto YNWA (You'll Never Walk Alone).

Currently an active social media to accommodate information about the match schedule about news about Liverpool, even activities such as quizzes that include prizes is Instagram and nobar activity (watching together), @indonesian_liverpool is not an official formation of Liverpool FC. But this account is the domain for The Kop Indonesia in expressing opinions, disappointments, or pride of Liverpool. Update by @indonesian_liverpool done several times a day. The most useful update for The Kop Indonesia is the live streaming link to watch the Liverpool games that are not all broadcasted on the screen. Not only that @indonesian_liverpool also sell merchandises that can be purchased by The Kop from all over Indonesia.

Comments by the followers given from each post by @indonesian_liverpool reaches hundreds to thousands. Each fan expresses his or her opinion or even his or her related analysis of a news or information submitted. Then when the results have been posted fans would often provide support and direction to Liverpool to play better in a certain way in order to excel or even equalized. In this interaction it is seen that the occurrence of Parasocial Interaction.

The phenomenon described above can be explained through the concept of parasocial interaction and parasocial relationship. Horton and Wohl (1956) in Hu (2016), see parasocial interaction as an interaction that has an illusive intimacy bond. Hartmann et al. (2008) in Hu (2016) defines Parasocial Interaction as an asymmetric interaction that



occurs in the process of perception and elaboration of a person's character when exposed to the media. Parasocial Interaction begins when a person begins to recognize and interact with the personae (figure of an idolized character) and ends when the interaction is over. While Parasocial Relationship is seen when this interaction is long-term, lasting and cross-situational concept. PSI interaction with post @indonesia_liverpool resulted in long-term relationship of PSR.

In this case we can observe from Instagram @indonesian_liverpool account of Parasocial Interaction that occurred when The Kop commented or even marked the Liverpool player on his comments as if the message will be read by Liverpool players. While the Parasocial Relationship that happened can be seen on account Instagram @indonesian_liverpool when fellow The Kop routinely give comments or end up reciprocating with other Kop regularly.

Described in Giles (2002) that Parasocial Relationship is an interpersonal relationship built and developed only unilaterally by individuals as well as the formation of interpersonal relationships with other individuals. In this type of relationship although one party does not communicate directly but felt the relationship that occurs with other individuals. These other individuals are usually celebrities or other characters that can be encountered through mass media. Parasocial relationships have several factors that must be met in order to produce a relationship: identification (identification of personal similarity between individual and other characters), wishful identification (affirmation of attitude or proximity to be built or done for the future), affinity (a sense of togetherness from the media user with the person he likes to feel more media usage time than the reception of information but as the period of developing the relationship.)

Parasocial interaction is shown when Instagram live service in @indonesian_liverpool account where the liverpool player successfully scored the goal. Then there are so many motivational remarks delivered by the fans through live Instagram. Like "goalll keep it up Salah" written by a fan on Instagram live addressed to Muhammad Salah who is a Liverpool player while mentioning @mosalah_22.

In Huang (2012) explained that the formation of parasocial relationship by users of mass media and digital will have implications of forming loyalty on the human brand associated. Where this is supported by three main factors of the individual who builds the parasocial relationship, ie:

1. Vanity: the level of individual awareness and pride to himself, where the inferior individual tends to build a parasocial relationship to compensate for his inferiority with the superiority of the idols
2. Variety seeking: a sense of the individual's need to discover the diversity of the services, products and entertainment he consumes which requires innovation from the brand to satisfy this need
3. Peer norms: individual needs for the existence of similarities related to perception, activity and preference with a group where it is located.



These three factors are the main reasons for building individual loyalty to an idol or human brand and implicating the strengths and fandom characteristics established to generate such loyalty. The existence of a form of parasocial relationship formed digitally by The Kop Indonesia gradually finally formed the loyalty of fans against the Liverpool club, and slowly against Liverpool as a brand.

Problem Identification and Formulation

As the @indonesian_liverpool routine always posts about Liverpool four to five times in one day. Social media is used to familiarize fans or attract a person's interest to contribute. It can be seen from Interaction between The Kop who gave comment to cheer idol club in post account instagram @ indonesian_liverpool. There is a parasocial relationship phenomenon, where fans are in a conscious inferior position knowing that a digital media-based relationship is one-way, as both the @indonesian_liverpool account and the official Liverpool player account never respond to fan comments. But the reality does not discourage fans to remain passionate motivation, encouragement, and comments to Liverpool FC. From this parasocial relationship phenomenon is slowly arise a sense of loyal fans to Liverpool FC. Because The Kop cannot interact directly.

Research Questions

Thus from the formulation of the above problems, research questions to be asked related to the phenomenon of parasocial relationship are:

1. How is the parasocial relationship mediated by social media accounts formed between the fans and Liverpool FC?
2. How does The Kop's sympathizers maintain their relationship while fans are aware of no response from Liverpool in digital-based communications.
3. How does the ongoing interaction can shape fans' loyalty to Liverpool FC as a brand?

Research Objectives

In relation to the above questions, this research is conducted to::

1. Know how a parasocial relationship is formed between the fans and Liverpool FC.
2. Know how The Kop sympathizers maintain their relationships while fans are aware of no response from Liverpool in digital-based communications.
3. Know what kind of long-term interaction between The Kop and Liverpool FC.



Research Significance

Academic Significance

The results of this study are expected to enrich the science of communication, especially related to Brand Trust, and Brand Awareness on Brand Loyalty the influence of the brand community on brand loyalty. The influence of brand trust on brand loyalty to the community. The influence of brand communities, brand trust, and brand awareness altogether on brand loyalty to the community.

Practical Significance

The research is expected to be utilized by corporates in Indonesia to develop methods of effective public relations development and maintain the enthusiasm of consumers related to the human brands provided.

Corporate Significance

Become an effort to generate effective public relations activities with a minimal budget for the long-term.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Parasocial

The concept of parasocial was first coined by Horton and Wohl in 1956 as a relationship of friendship or intimacy with a media personality based on one's affective word on a particular character (in Harvey & Manusov 2001). Horton and Wohl mention two terms, namely parasocial interaction and parasocial relationships.

Parasocial Interaction and Parasocial Relationships

The main key to parasocial interaction is a one-way relationship in which television viewers feel to have a special relationship with favorite idols, but the relationship is one-way, non-dialectical, controlled by media and unfettered figures (Horton & Wohl in Watkins 2005). Biran (2003) defines parasocial interaction as an attempt to establish a conversation between performers and television viewers. While the parasocial relationship is an illusion of a direct link between television viewers and performers, as a fiction of the mass media.

Another definition of Stever's interacial interaction (2013) refers to a person's response to a television media figure as if the figure really exists in the room in which he is located. While the parasocial relationship refers to the expansion of the parasocial interactions that arise even though one no longer sees the media figure. According to Horton & Wohl (1982) the term media figures are used to describe distinctive and original characters in social life displayed on radio and television, such as fictional characters appearing in film or opera. Horton and Wohl (1956) see parasocial interaction as an interaction that has an illusive intimacy bond. Hartmann et al. (2008) defines parasocials.



Interaction as an asymmetric interaction that occurs in the process of perception and elaboration of a person's character when exposed to media. Parasocial Interaction begins when a person begins to recognize and interact with the personae (figure of an idolized character). Examples such as when someone from The Kop commented giving flattery on @ indonesian_liverpool to Liverpool or Liverpool players.

While Parasocial Relationship is seen when this interaction is long-term and with cross-situational concept. PSI interaction with personae may result in a long-term form of PSR relationship. An example can be seen when someone from The Kop follows the social media account @ indonesian_liverpool then routinely provides like in the post, regular member comments, or finally formed a routine interaction occurs with fellow The Kop when discussing an issue about Liverpool.

Factors Influencing Parasocial

Factors that are believed to influence the formation of parasocial include motivation. Motivation in question is the motivation to obtain goals, needs, and desires that in the context of parasocial is the need for social satisfaction and emotional. It can motivate individuals to watch more television shows and able to help individuals satisfy the needs of individual memberships in a group (Hoffner, 2012). In this case The Kop holds the motto of Liverpool namely YNWA (You'll Never Walk Alone). This is what The Kop needs which is a convincing motivation that The Kop never runs alone and hope for tomorrow is always there. That is what satisfies The Kop as a group, and that motivates The Kop to watch Liverpool games.

Definition of Concept

Brand Loyalty

Aaker (1997: 57) defines that brand loyalty is a measure of consumer interest in a brand. Brand loyalty is a customer's positive attitude and customer commitment to a brand over other brands. Loyal customers will generally continue to use the brand despite being faced with many alternative brands of competing products that offer superior product characteristics.

Social Media

Simply put, the term media can be described as a communication tool as well as a known definition. Sometimes this media tends to be closer to its mass nature because it is seen from the various theories that appear in mass communication. The word social in social media should theoretically be approached by the realm of sociology. The word social simply refers to social relations. Social relations itself can be seen in categories of social action and social relations. Two basic notions of meditation and social have been described, but not easy to make a definition of social media based on technological devices alone. It takes the approach of social theories to clarify what distinguishes between social media and other media on the internet prior to the conclusion of what is meant by social media. Social Media is a medium on the internet that allows users to

represent themselves as well as interact, cooperate, share, communicate with other users, and form a virtual social bond. (Rulli Nasrullah, 2015)

Instagram

Instagram is derived from the word "instan" or "insta", like the polaroid camera that was formerly known as "instant photo" (Instagram insight, 2012, in <http://.id.wikipedia.org/wiki/instagram>, accessed on January 04, 2016). Instagram can also display photos instantly in its appearance. As for the word "gram" comes from the word "telegram", where the way telegram work is to send information to others quickly. Similarly, Instagram that can upload photos using the Internet network, so the information submitted can be received quickly. Therefore Instagram comes from the word "instant-telegram" (Putri, 2013:14).

According to Bambang, Instagram is an application from Smartphone specifically for social media which is one of the digital media that has a function similar to twitter, but the difference lies in taking pictures in the form or place to share information to its users. Instagram can also provide inspiration for its users and also able to increase creativity, because Instagram has a feature that can make photos become more beautiful, more artistic and become better (Atmoko, 2012: 10).

Conceptual Model of Description above *Parasocial Relations*

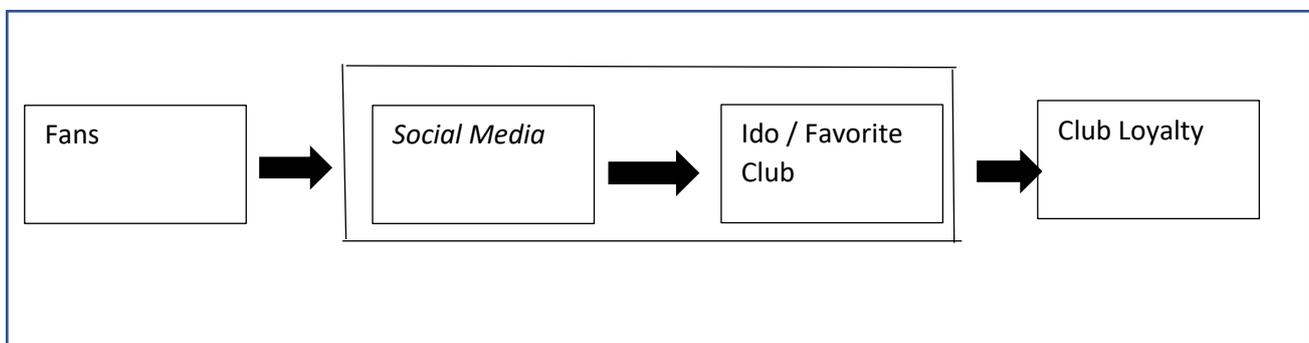


Figure 1

Research Methodology

Research Paradigm

Research Method is one part of the research activity that includes the procedure how a study conducted. Research method functions to assist researchers in designing scientific work, so that a research can take place quickly and accurately. In every scientific study, methodology is always concerned with the workings of researchers in approaching and understanding the object of research. (Koentjaraningrat, 1991: 122). Without a methodology, a study is not worth mentioning as a work / scientific work.



One of the parts included in the research methodology is the paradigm. In this study, researchers will use a constructivist paradigm. This paradigm is almost an antithesis of the notion that lays observation and objectivity in finding a reality or science. This paradigm views social science as a systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through direct and detailed observation of the social actors concerned and maintains or manages their social world. Research with this paradigm opens up space on the variety of interpretations of the meaning of reality.

This paradigm states that:

1. The basis for explaining life, social events and human beings is not a science in a positivistic framework, but precisely in common sense. According to them, knowledge and layman's thoughts contain the meaning that the individual gives to his daily experience and life and that is the beginning of social science research.
2. The applied approach is inductive, meaning the researcher move from the specific to the general, from concrete to abstract.
3. Science is indographic rather than nomothetic, because science reveals that reality is displayed in symbols through descriptive forms.
4. Knowledge is not only acquired through senses, since the understanding of meaning and interpretation is considered far more important.
5. Non value-free knowledge. Value-free conditions do not become something that is considered important or impossible to achieve (Sarantakos, 1993).

According to Patton, constructivist researchers study the diverse realities constructed by individuals and the implications of such constructs for their lives with others. In constructivist, each individual has a unique experience. Thus, research with such strategies suggests that each individual's way of taking is valid and therefore there is a need for a sense of appreciation for that view (Patton, 2002).

The researchers use a constructivist paradigm because of the desire to gain a development of understanding that helps the process of interpretation of an event. Meanwhile, the subject of study who is considered to have had experience of intimate relationship is a unique study and interesting to investigate. The experience of intimate relationship is a very personal experience for each individual thus will result in a unique meaning.

Research Approach

This research uses qualitative research type. Qualitative research looks at most of social life intrinsically. According to Lawrence Neuman (2006: 157), qualitative research is: *“Qualitative researchers use a language of case and contexts, employ bricolage, examine social processes and case in their social context, and look at interpretations or the creation of meaning in spesific settings. They look at social life from multiple points of view and explain how people construct identities. Only rarely do they use variable or test hypotheses, or convert social life into numbers.”*



Most studies use grounded theory. This is what makes the study has data that is flexible and more interesting. According to See Harper and Schwandt in Neuman (2006: 157), qualitative research remains open to change, qualitative research is willing to change the direction or focus of a research project and may leave their original research question in the middle of their research project. Case-study research by Neuman (2006: 40) can be done by individuals, groups, organizations, interest groups, events, or units based on geography. Some people believe that qualitative research data is gentle, concrete and material. Qualitative research data includes documentation

Research Strategy

Research strategy can be formulated as a form of a way pursued by the researchers in realizing research. The strategies selected and applied by the researcher in turn will influence the process and determine the results of the research. The strategy in this qualitative research is netnography. The Hine Netnography Research Strategy (2011) is another name for ethnography that specializes in online culture and community.

This research uses netnography approach. The study of netnography is one type of descriptive qualitative research. Netnography focuses specifically on the digital world community, such as online communities. Kozinets noted at least three differences between these two approaches. First, access to an online community or culture, which is different from ethnographic studies. Second, in the netnography study, data collection and analysis has its own challenges and opportunities, since the data obtained is always digital. Third, the difference of ethical procedure for the researcher to his research room. (Kozinets, 2010. h.5) The netnographic study basically evolved to help the researchers to understand virtual world (community) more comprehensively. The researchers not only learn forums, chats, and news-groups, but also blogs, graphic images, and social media (Kozinets, 2010. H. 3). In summary, netnography is an ethnography for the virtual world, studying the complex cultural practices, about the value it exists in, and the meanings, languages and signs in the online world.

Research Type

This research is a qualitative work, in which the research procedure produces descriptive data in the form of written words from people and behavior that can be observed (Moleong, 2007). Meanwhile, (Sugiyono, 2005) calls this research an effort aimed at understanding social phenomena from the point of view of participants. Thus, it can be said that in this type of research, the researcher is a key instrument.

The researchers seek to examine and understand a social phenomenon and human problems. Through this research, the researchers made a complex picture, examined the words, detailed reports from respondents' views, and conducted studies on natural situations (Creswell, 1998: 15). The data generated in this study are descriptive in the form of written or oral words.

Also a The Kopman who praised Mohamad Salah for calling him the King of Egypt. This shows the one-way interaction relationship that occurs from a fan to his idol.



Figure 5

Then @ ryantjong_94 who delivered his support to Liverpool or with the nickname of The Reds, stating "The Reds till we die ...! YNWA ". YNWA itself is a slogan from Liverpool FC stands for You'll Never Walk Alone. This clearly shows the loyalty of a fan. Where although he only see posts via Instagram but He is not shy to show his loyalty to his favorite club that is Liverpool.



Figure 6

Even from the above comment it can be understood that a person from The Kop named @ firmansyahraflia221 regarded Salah even as his brother by declaring "akhi salah barakallah" which is translated into Bahasa Indonesia is my brother Salah may be blessed. This clearly shows the Parasocial interaction in which a person considers another person as his brother but unfortunately the other side does not consider the same thing. In this case the fans are in an inferior position in the parasocial interaction. But this is not questioned by fans. Although the direction of communication tend to be unidirectional. Because based on interviews that the writing did with a person from The Kop who also commented on the post said that

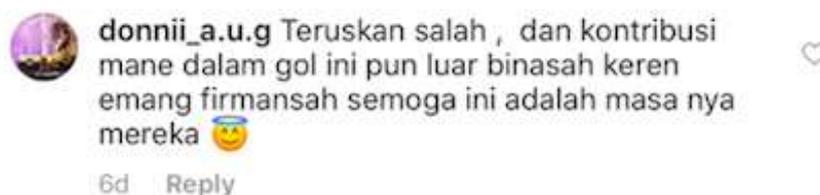


Figure 7

Here are the comments from @ donnii_a.u.g who provide advice and motivation to the Liverpool Star Mohamad Salah, Firmino, and Sadio Mane submitted in the comment field post @ indonesian_liverpool.

Here is a form of parasocial relationships formed between fellow The Kop:



Figure 8

Where The Kop replied to each other's comments like a friend who was chatting. Like @retrocityactivity which shows his admiration for the goals made by Mohamad Salah then @youhanismahmoud responded to the comment. Clearly, parasocial relationships occur.

Parasocial Relationship mediated social media account formed between the fans and Liverpool FC happened because after account Instagram @indonesian_liverpool followed by The Kop then every day they will be exposed postings about Liverpool up to five times per day. Gradually The Kop who has become a follower @indonesian_liverpool became increasingly "familiar" with Liverpool FC. So eventually there was a parasocial interaction in which The Kop conveyed support, messages, or even advice to Liverpool through comments. Until finally formed the parasocial relationship between The Kop who give each other comments as in some of the findings presented.

According to the researchers interview with a person from The Kop who follow Instagram @indonesian_liverpool account the sympathizers The Kop interpreted their relationship with Liverpool FC as a friend. Where YNWA's motto (You'll Never Walk Alone) is firmly held. Where The Kop always faithfully supporting Liverpool not only when winning, but also when draws and even lost.

When viewed from the findings of these comments show a warm interaction between fellow The Kop who replied to each other comments on post account Instagram @indonesian_liverpool. The development of this relationship can be seen from the Parasocial Interaction where initially The Kop who just follow @indonesian_liverpool, and then provides like or comment. After the comment was sent. Greeted and even received a reply from the other The Kop societies. Although from the account @indonesian_liverpool and Liverpool players do not respond to comments in The Kop. Comments, like, many reach thousands and the interaction between The Kop also continues to exist with reply to comments. This did not discourage The Kop to show their support.

Based on interviews with sympathizers of The Kop even though comments are not replied by @indonesian_liverpool and Liverpool players account. The Kop does not take this into account and still sends comments. The Kop who follow @indonesian_liverpool also said that through the @indonesian_liverpool container can find out more



information about Liverpool. And can interact with other The Kop from various regions throughout Indonesia. Every post there is also considered as motivating and satisfying The Kop as a fan of Liverpool, that's the reason why The Kop persist in the parasocial relationship.

Interactions that occur though tend to be one-way where @ indonesian_liverpool only publishes post 4-5 images every day without replying to the comments of The Kop, as well as Liverpool players who are often marked in comments not replying. According to the researchers' interviews with sympathizers The Kop it is not a problem because every post it is considered as motivating and satisfying The Kop as a fan of Liverpool.

Because of the satisfaction, the sympathizers of The Kop exposed information from the post about Liverpool every day. Finally it encourages the formation of loyalty between The Kop with Liverpool FC. Until finally evidence of loyalty is a call that appears "The Reds till we die" which is the motto that shows the loyalty of The Kop for Liverpool.

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